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Hamilton Questions Reagan Policies

With the death of Chairman Clement

Zablocki (D., Wis.) last year, Mr. Hamil-

ton is the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and in combina-

tion with the feisty new chairman, Rep. Dante Fascell (D., Fla.) his rise is seen by

Democrats as an opportunity for the House

panel to reassert itself in foreign policy.

mittee have added to his stature and ag-

gressiveness so that the Indiana Democrat

is a critical barometer of the White House's ability to win bipartisan support

a new generation of leaders who fall be-

tween the post-World War II and post-Viet-

nam eras. He is less apt to apply either of

those historic analogies to foreign policy.

Instead, he draws lessons from both. He of-

ten seemed a bridge between Mr. Zablocki

and younger Democrats because he shares

not only the late chairman's commitment

to an American role abroad but also the

younger generation's suspicion of military

gives him unusual freedom from the ethnic

voting blocks that often influence Congress

on foreign policy, and this has added to his

credibility. Under President Carter, he

took the lead in a difficult fight for military aid to Turkey opposed by Greek-

Americans, including his powerful Indiana

colleague, former Majority Whip John-Bra-

demas. In 1980, Mr. Hamilton made a less

successful effort to salvage \$3.5 million in

His rural district in southern Indiana

entanglements.

At 52 years old, Mr. Hamilton is part of .

for its foreign policy initiatives.

His three years on the Intelligence Com-

Indiana Congressman Plays Growing Role In U.S. Foreign Affairs

By DAVID ROGERS

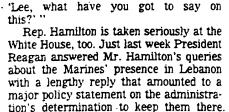
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON-He is a quiet man who can make himself heard, a minister's son who sits at the right hand of power. Almost unnoticed, Lee Hamilton has come of age in Congress, and after two decades in the House, the cautious Democrat from southern Indiana is assuming a prominent role in shaping foreign policy.

'He has great credibility with me,' says House Speaker Thomas O'Neill.

As Congress begins debate on the two divisive issues that will dominate this session - Central America and the continued presence of U.S. Marines in Lebanon-Mr. Hamilton is perhaps the most important single adviser to the House Democratic leadership.

"There are ac-Lee Hamilton cents to the speaker's voice," says Majority Whip Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) describing Mr. O'Neill's tone at leadership meetings. "He will say,



Last summer he got the White House's attention on Central American policy when he helped lead an unprecedented challenge to the administration's covert war in Nicaragua. And now he is expressing reservations about the Kissinger Commission report on Central America, which the Reagan administration intends to use to bolster its plea for more military aid to its allies in that region.

"The biggest disappointment is the lack of emphasis on negotiations," he says of the Kissinger Commission report. "There's not "enough emphasis on political solutions."



economic funds for Syria, opposed by Jewish voters and members aligned with the pro-Israel lobby. He prefers diplomacy to military solutions. For instance, he is far more willing to approve economic aid to Central America than a substantial increase in arms assistance. He insists on human-rights conditions on arms for El Salvador, and last

While Mr. Reagan may dismiss liberal opposition in Congress, to lose Mr. Hamilton is to lose a crucial bridge between the left and right.

year he played a critical role in preserving

Democratic unity on that issue.

This was most evident in the debate on Nicaragua last summer, and in both Intelligence and Foreign Affairs committees. the CIA-backed incursion provoked a sharp partisan split. Though Mr. Zablocki wavered, Mr. Hamilton was firmly allied with Intelligence Committee Chairman Edward Boland (D., Mass.), and their victory laid the groundwork for a later compromise limiting funding for the operation

In a rare secret session of the full House, it was Mr. Hamilton who delivered

what many described as the most damaging speech. The congressman built his case by turning the CIA's recently completed National Intelligence Estimate against the CIA and administration. "The two most careful guys in the House are probably Eddie Boland and Lee Hamilton," said Rep. Leon Panetta (D., Calif.) after the closed door session. "If they're concerned about a policy, you'd better be concerned."

Even as Mr. Hamilton helped draft the Lebanon war powers resolution last fall allowing the Marines to stay in Beirut for 18 months, he warned the administration it couldn't expect continued support from the House for the full period. Unless diplomatic progress is made, he said, his backing of the Marine presence could wane after March, and he was clearly disappointed that Mr. Reagan gave no encouragement of an earlier withdrawal in his letter to Mr. Hamilton last week.

This exchange between the president and Mr. Hamilton is a striking illustration of the Democrat's importance and style. Always cautious, the congressman didn't consider even writing a letter until encouraged by Rep. Les Aspin (D., Wis.), who has a greater flair for publicity and political maneuvering. The first and final drafts were Mr. Hamilton's in substance, how-

A tall scholarly man who neither drinks nor smokes, Mr. Hamilton is a striking contrast to the burly, cigar smoking Mr. O'Neill. His graying crewcut and flat-toned voice suit his Midwest reserve, but underneath is the more physical, engaging style of the six-foot-four-inch center who starred in basketball in high school and at DePauw University.

Evansville, the congressman's boyhood home, is a river port city on the Ohio. After years of campaigning and post office tours in small hamlets, Mr. Hamilton's picture can be found on the walls of rural gas stations, and the district has put its own stamp on him.

Careful not to move too far away from domestic concerns, he has balanced his foreign policy interest with a long tenure on the Joint Economic Committee, which he will head in 1985. He has separated himself from the Great Society and New Deal liberalism of Lyndon Johnson and Mr. O'Neill, and he almost painfully cultivates the image of the independent who cannot be captured by any interest.

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